

# THE IMAGE OF THE MEDICAL DOCTOR IN BYZANTINE LITERATURE OF THE TENTH TO TWELFTH CENTURIES

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One Late Roman emperor, Theodosius II, and two Byzantine *basileis*, Basil I and John II, died from hunting accidents.<sup>1</sup> Since it is so early, I will leave aside the story of Theodosius' death and concentrate on the two cases that took place in 886 and 1143 respectively. Both are minutely described in contemporary (or almost contemporary) sources that do not differ substantially from each other. Basil is said to have been lifted up by a huge deer that pushed his antlers under the emperor's belt and carried him off; once he had been released by a servant who managed to cut the belt, the emperor ordered the man to be arrested, as if he had drawn his sword to murder the prince. "After suffering severe internal pains and hemorrhage of the stomach, nine days later he paid our common debt . . . leaving his scepter to his sons." Such is the version of the Life of Patriarch Euthymius. It is generally supported by both the so-called *Logothetes-Sippe* and the anonymous chronicler widely known as Joseph Genesis.<sup>2</sup>

Two Byzantine historians, John Cinnamus and Nicetas Choniates, relate Emperor John's end. The emperor was out hunting in Cilicia; he encoun-

tered a boar, wielded a spear, but awkwardly touched a quiver full of poisoned arrows and wounded his wrist, which became inflamed. The doctors who were called in discussed what should be done and decided to lance the swelling. The treatment failed and John died.<sup>3</sup>

There is a substantial difference between the two stories: the authors of the tenth century make no mention of physicians. None of the chroniclers speaks even briefly of doctors who tended the dying emperor, although they describe the fatal hemorrhage of the stomach. The twelfth-century authors, on the other hand, are very explicit as to the role of the *paides iatron* (Cinnamus) or *iatroi, asklepiadai* (Choniates). "To some it seemed best to lance the swelling, but its unripeness disquieted the others, and they preferred that it be relieved in some other way. But as it seems that he had to fare ill, the opinion for surgery carried the day." And so forth.

Now we face the problem. Is this difference between the two stories a random phenomenon, a reflection of personal and incidental tendencies only, or are we entitled to suggest that the place of the doctor in Byzantine society changed between the first half of the tenth century, when the chroniclers were able to ignore the doctors' call to Basil's deathbed, and the end of the twelfth century, when Choniates and Cinnamus centered the story of John's demise on the doctors' attitude? Let us con-

[The reader is referred to the list of abbreviations at the end of the volume.]

<sup>1</sup> R. Guiland, *Etudes byzantines* (Paris, 1959), 11 f.

<sup>2</sup> *Vita Euthymii Patriarchae CP*, ed. and trans. P. Karlin-Hayter (Brussels, 1970), 2–5; Leo Grammaticus, *Chronographia*, ed. I. Bekker (Bonn, 1842), 262.1–11; Josephus Genesis, *Regum libri quattuor*, ed. A. Lesmüller-Werner and I. Thurn (Berlin and New York, 1978), 91.29–32. The name "Genesis" has been added by a later hand in the single manuscript; "Joseph" is the result of arbitrary identifications. The episode is completely disregarded by the Life of St. Theophano, which asserts that Basil died from "ailment and old age" (*BHG*, 1794: E. Kurtz, *Zwei griechische Texte über die hl. Theophano* [St. Petersburg, 1898], 12.20–21, 14.4).

<sup>3</sup> Ioannes Cinnamus, *Epitome*, ed. A. Meineke (Bonn, 1836), 24 f. (see John Kinnamos, *Deeds of John and Manuel Comnenus*, trans. Ch. M. Brand [New York, 1976], 27–29); Nicetas Choniates, *Historia*, ed. I. A. van Dieten (Berlin, New York, 1975), 40 f. Both authors have, probably, used a common source. On this episode, R. Browning, "The Death of John II Comnenus," *Byzantion*, 21 (1961), 236.

trol our observation by shifting to a different type of source—to Byzantine epistolography.

Among the relatively vast correspondence of Photius (the second half of the ninth century), containing more than two hundred letters, only two were addressed to an *iatros*, the monk Acacius.<sup>4</sup> But was this monk really a doctor, or rather a doctor of moral pains, as some saints used to be called? At any rate, Photius speaks here of a cure for the passions, not of the healing of physical illnesses.

Even fewer traces of the medical profession are to be found in tenth-century collections of letters: none of about two hundred letters dispatched by Nicholas Mysticus<sup>5</sup> was addressed to a physician, nor are there physicians among the addressees of Leo Choiosphactes, Theodore Daphnopates or Nicetas the Magistros.<sup>6</sup> No letter to a doctor was written by an anonymous teacher of the tenth century;<sup>7</sup> and in the tenth-century epistolaria containing several hundreds of letters sent by various persons, none was addressed to a physician.<sup>8</sup> We do not know to what extent the epistolary corpus would coincide with, or represent proportionally, the social structure of addressees in actually dispatched letters; but if we assume that some individuals of the tenth century did write to doctors, we have to recognize that they preferred not to include those letters in their collections. The situation changes drastically as we move towards the twelfth century.

Theophylact of Ochrid sent several letters to Michael Pantechnes, the *iatros* of Emperor Alexius I.<sup>9</sup> According to one of the lemmata (PG, 126, col. 464C), Michael was Theophylact's pupil. Michael Pantechnes is mentioned in the *Alexiad* of Anna Comnena as one of the doctors who attended the dying Alexius in 1117–18.<sup>10</sup> The lead seal of a certain *proedros* or *protoproedros* Michael Pantechnes is

preserved, but the identification of both personages is not assured.<sup>11</sup> It is also debatable whether the *proedros* and *proximos* Pantechnes, the addressee of two other letters of Theophylact, was our Michael or another person, namely John Pantechnes, also a correspondent of Theophylact.<sup>12</sup> Michael was not the only medical friend of Theophylact: a series of letters was also sent to Nicholas Callicles, who is designated as *archiatros* in a lemma (PG, 126, col. 440D). Again, the “senior physician” Callicles is known from other sources: Anna Comnena includes him in the list of the three “best doctors” (*koryphaioi ton iatron*), side by side with Michael Pantechnes and a certain eunuch Michael (*Alexiad* 3.236.20–24); Callicles was a court poet,<sup>13</sup> and he is considered as one of the possible candidates for the authorship of the anonymous dialogue *Timarion*.<sup>14</sup> The third medical addressee of Theophylact was the emperor's *iatros* Nicetas.<sup>15</sup>

The collection of letters of Michael Italicus is not large: it contains about thirty-five missives. Even so, two of them were addressed to physicians. One of these men is merely called *aktouarios* in the lemma, but P. Gautier is inclined to identify him with the above-mentioned Michael Pantechnes.<sup>16</sup> The second letter was sent to an *iatros*, Leipsiotes by name, who is otherwise unknown; according to Michael Italicus, he was the most “philosophical” and the most literate (*grammatikotatos*) among physicians, and we can hypothesize that Leipsiotes, like Callicles, was a writer as well.<sup>17</sup>

Three of the 107 letters of John Tzetzes' epistolographic collection are intended for physicians: the *archiatros* Michael, a “long-armed” person who provided Tzetzes with partridges from Adrianople; the imperial doctor Basil Megistus, Tzetzes' “lord and brother,” who was not only versed, according to Tzetzes, in the skill of the *asklepiadai*, not only brilliant in general scholarship, not only distinguished by pleasant bearing, by reliability and prudence, but—what counted particularly for a

<sup>4</sup>Photius, *Epistolae*, ed. I. N. Barlettas (London, 1864), 428, nos. 106–7. There are no medical addressees in the collection published by A. I. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Svjatejšego patriarcha Fotija XLV neizdannych pisem* (St. Petersburg, 1896).

<sup>5</sup>Nicholas I Patriarch of Constantinople, *Letters*, ed. R. J. H. Jenkins and L. G. Westerink (Washington, 1973); two more letters are included in Nicholas' *Miscellaneous Writings*, ed. L. G. Westerink (Washington, 1981), nos. 193 and 198.

<sup>6</sup>Léon Choerosphactès . . . *Biographie—Correspondance*, ed. G. Kolias (Athens, 1939); Nicetas Magistros, *Lettres d'un exilé*, ed. L. G. Westerink (Paris, 1973); Théodore Daphnopatès, *Correspondance*, ed. J. Darrouzès and L. G. Westerink (Paris, 1978).

<sup>7</sup>R. Browning and B. Laourdas, “To keimenon ton epistolon tou kodikos BM 36749,” *Επ. Έτ.Βυζ.Σπ.*, 27 (1957), 151–212.

<sup>8</sup>J. Darrouzès, *Epistoliers byzantins du X<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris, 1960).

<sup>9</sup>S. Maslev in *Fontes Graeci Historiae Bulgariae IX*, 1 (Sofia, 1974), 28–32.

<sup>10</sup>Anne Comnène, *Alexiade*, ed. and trans. B. Leib (Paris, 1945), 231.2, 236.22.

<sup>11</sup>G. Schlumberger, *Sigillographie de l'empire byzantin* (Paris, 1884), 687; Ch. Diehl, “De la signification du titre de ‘proèdre’ à Byzance,” *Mélanges G. Schlumberger*, 1 (Paris, 1924), 116.

<sup>12</sup>J. Darrouzès, in Georges et Démétrios Tornikès, *Lettres et discours* (Paris, 1970), 50, n. 32, identifies him with John Pantechnes.

<sup>13</sup>His poems have been published by R. Romano: Nicola Callicle, *Carmi* (Naples, 1980).

<sup>14</sup>R. Romano in Pseudo-Luciano, *Timarione* (Naples, 1974), 25–31.

<sup>15</sup>PG, 126, col. 472C. See Maslev in *Fontes*, 69.

<sup>16</sup>Michel Italikos, *Lettres et discours*, ed. P. Gautier (Paris, 1972), 209. See Gautier's comment, 46–48.

<sup>17</sup>Michel Italikos, 204 f.

Byzantine—he was known to the emperor and was dubbed “the eye of the Senate.” The third letter is addressed to the *nosokomos* of the hospital of the Pantocrator monastery, whose name is, unfortunately, omitted from the lemma; the letter reveals nothing about this obscure director of a very famous hospital; what Tzetzes is discussing here is the time of Galen’s life.<sup>18</sup>

The last collection of letters I wish to consider is that of Michael Choniates, the archbishop of Athens at the time of the Fourth Crusade: among the 180 letters of his collection, one is addressed to the *archiatros* George Callistus and three to the *iatros* or *archiatros* Nicholas Caloduces.<sup>19</sup> Callistus is described as a dexterous doctor of the body, as a representative of the “philanthropic vocation,” but Choniates puts the emphasis on his quality as a healer of souls, whose letters are remedies and antidotes for those who suffer. The letters to Caloduces are less rhetorical and more specific. Choniates thanks his correspondent—not without irony—for his care of the exiled archbishop, the old man who found refuge on a small island: in fact, Caloduces, in answering Choniates’ complaints, had sent him a book of Galen’s about diet, drink and exercise, but it turned out that the archbishop was unable to apply the medical advice to his situation. For instance, he says, there is no bathhouse on the island; the inhabitants would wash themselves in a small booth, the door of which could not be closed; some parts of the body were suffering from fire, while others froze as if in an open field. The people choked from the smoke of the hearth and peeped their heads outdoors. The local bishop, continues Choniates, would always cover his head lest he catch cold, and wash his hair outside the booth.<sup>20</sup> Even more relevant is another letter to Caloduces, in which Choniates formulates two moral rules for an honest doctor: first, you should not raise your fees too high (*me baryneis tous misthous tes therapeias*), and secondly, you should not be negligent and indifferent to the pain of your patients, especially those who combine grave illness with severe poverty (p. 264.9–14).

Certainly, not all the major epistolographic collections of the twelfth century contain letters ad-

dressed to medical doctors; thus, to my knowledge, neither Eustathius of Thessalonica nor Euthymius Malaces left letters of this kind. So far as other epistolographers are concerned, the very insignificant number of epistles they have left us allows us to dispense with them.

More complex is the question of the treatment of the medical profession in Byzantine hagiography. Saints’ Lives of the sixth and seventh centuries, as H. J. Magoulias has demonstrated,<sup>21</sup> present a series of Late Roman physicians who are loaded with ignorance and avarice and who are unable to vie with healer-saints. Then the doctor disappears from hagiography (we might say with hagiography, since we do not possess hagiographic texts of the eighth century):<sup>22</sup> when the genre was reintroduced, the writers practically ignored the medical profession, as it was the case of the Life of Philaretus the Merciful (*BHG*, 1511z–1512). The lives of the ninth-century saints are vague in their attitude towards medical doctors and lenient to their vices, so colorfully described by earlier hagiographers. Saints are presented as capable of miraculous healings, but their secular rivals are just left in the shadow, and their incapacity is rather silenced than not. Thus St. Evariste is praised as “the best physician and the guide of the greatest salvation,” and many sinners are said to have received cures and healing from him.<sup>23</sup> This passage doubtlessly refers to the spiritual healing of sins, but Evariste served as a doctor of bodily illnesses as well: he cured a woman by sending her a ring from the iron chain he wore to tame his flesh (van de Vorst, p. 314.28–36; also p. 315.1–7); another woman was healed by olive oil (p. 319.15–20); and the hagiographer registered many cases of cures on the tomb of the saint (p. 314.20–24, 323.10–11, 20–22). He teaches that the divine energy and grace is much

<sup>21</sup> H. J. Magoulias, “The Lives of the Saints as Sources of Data for the History of Byzantine Medicine in the Sixth and Seventh Centuries,” *BZ*, 57 (1964), 128–33. To the *Vitae* used by Magoulias we can add now the pre-Metaphrastic Life of St. Sampson written, according to F. Halkin (“Saint Sampson le xénodoque de Constantinople [VI<sup>e</sup> siècle],” *RSBN*, 14–16 [1977–79], 6), “sans doute” in the seventh or at the very beginning of the eighth centuries. To the best of my knowledge, Magoulias’ work has not been continued. Some remarks, however, are to be found in A. P. Rudakov, *Očerki vizantijskoj kul’tury po dannym grečeskoj agiografii* (Moscow, 1917), 96–98.

<sup>22</sup> I. Ševčenko, “Hagiography of the Iconoclast Period,” in his *Ideology, Letters and Culture in the Byzantine World* (London, 1982), 1–3 (first published in *Iconoclasm* [Birmingham, 1977], 113 f.); less clearly in A. Papadakis, “Hagiography in Relation to Iconoclasm,” *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, 14 (1969), 161–63.

<sup>23</sup> *BHG*, 2153; C. van de Vorst in *AnalBoll*, 41 (1923), 314.3–10. See also p. 315.11–12, 316.8–9.

<sup>18</sup> Ioannes Tzetzes, *Epistulae*, ed. P. A. M. Leone (Leipzig, 1972), nos. 48, 74, 81. On Galen’s tradition in Tzetzes, J. Scarborough, “The Galenic Question,” *SA*, 65 (1981), 20. On Byzantine hospitals, see T. Miller’s paper by that title, in this volume.

<sup>19</sup> Michael Akominates, *Ta sozomena*, ed. S. Lampros, 2 (Athens, 1880), nos. 92, 107, 115, 131.

<sup>20</sup> On this letter, A. Berger, *Das Bad in der byzantinischen Zeit* (Munich, 1982), 71.

more powerful than "human medical service" (p. 315.29–30); Evariste was able to cure the very diseases that doctors proclaimed incurable (p. 316.6–8, 19–23). However, there is no sharp animosity against doctors in this Life. Typically, for this Life, the hagiographer describes the illness of Evariste's spiritual teacher, Nicholas of Studius (d. 868), without any hint of doctors' assistance (p. 307.28–32)—he does not care about them.

The author of the Life of Theophano, the wife of the Emperor Leo VI (886–912), mentions his own and his brother's illnesses: in both cases many of the best doctors were called. They tried various means and medications (Kurtz, *Zwei griechische Texte*, 19.34–35, 22.24–26), and even though their treatments turned out to be of no avail, the Life shows no flouting of them. Again, the Life of Nicholas of Studius recorded several cases of doctors' helplessness before grave diseases (*BHG*, 1365: PG, 105, col. 913D, 916C, 924BC) which the saint was able to cure, but the hagiographer does not scoff at the poor *iatroi*. In the same indirect way the Life of Thomais of Lesbos expresses the author's attitude towards the medical profession: a certain Eutychianus spent his whole life with the *asklepiadai* longing for his physical health, but it was a miracle that finally cured his paralysis (*BHG*, 2454; *ActaSS*, Novembris IV, 240CD).

Even more evocative is the Life of Peter of Argos, who acted, according to his biographer, with more experience than the *asklepiadai*, since he was a doctor of the soul and they doctors of the body.<sup>24</sup> The saint was the genuine doctor, indeed,<sup>25</sup> but his secular colleagues retained their medical functions, albeit on a reduced scale.

Nicetas Paphlago is a very controversial figure: we do not know whether this name covers one or two different writers, and to which of them, in this case, we should ascribe the authorship of the Life of the Patriarch Ignatius (847–58, 867–77), a notorious work that combines eulogy of the saint and the pasquinade on his enemy, the Patriarch Photius (858–67, 877–86). Nicetas describes several miraculous healings achieved by applying the holy relics of Ignatius. One of these cases refers to obstetrics, and in this connection Nicetas mentions *iatroi*: the delivery was troubled because of the baby's

wrong position, so the doctors suggested using surgery and extracting the child piece by piece. The saint's intervention, however, saved the baby (PG, 105, col. 564B). Again, the physicians are less effective than the piece of Ignatius' cloak applied to the body of the suffering mother, but they are in no way villains. Nicetas even produced a Life of a medical doctor, St. Diomedes of Tarse, a healer of bodies and souls who tended the poor for free and visited Christian martyrs in prisons.<sup>26</sup>

Some of the Saints' Lives produced during this span of time ignored the medical topic completely (for instance, that of Irene of Chrysobalantus, *BHG*, 952), or briefly related the saint's miraculous healings without mentioning doctors (among others, that of Euthymius the Younger, *BHG*, 655). But towards the end of the tenth century, the medical doctor of hagiographical texts ceases to be a nebulous name functioning somewhere at the background as a kind of foil to the saint: the saint met his match, who was doomed to be mocked, despised and rejected. Symeon Metaphrastes inserted in his reworked version of the Life of St. Sampson a long passage about a hospital in tenth-century Constantinople during the reign of Emperor Romanus II (959–63): Metaphrastes does not disparage the quality of medical service, but he complains that the hospital would run out of olive oil, and that its employees acted with such negligence that Sampson felt obliged to appear from the other world and punish the culprits (*BHG*, 1615: PG, 115, col. 300B–304B).

The Life of the tenth-century saint Luke the Stylite is especially abundant in tales that illustrate the preference for the saint over his secular rival. Cyrus, an official of the postal service (*dromos*), fell sick and suffered from acute pain, but was treated in vain by *iatron paides*.<sup>27</sup> A woman who had experienced intermittent fever and chills for three years wasted her fortune looking for medical help but did not recover (Delehay, p. 227.32–36). The eunuch Sergius was severely beaten at the Hippodrome of Constantinople and brought to the hospital (*nosokomeion*) of Eubulus for treatment. The people so versed in medical skill, says the hagiographer ironically, tried to cure him but without any result. His head was so swollen that one could not see his eyes or nose or ears. The poor victim had a

<sup>24</sup> *BHG*, 1504: Ch. Papoikonomou, *Ho poliouchos tou Argou Petros episkopos* (Athens, 1908), 64.28–29.

<sup>25</sup> See, for instance, the Lives of St. Blasius (*BHG*, 273; *ActaSS*, Novembris IV, 667E) and St. Theocletus (*BHG*, 2420: ed. A. Sgouritzes in *Theologia*, 27 [1956], 592.15–16). On St. Evariste see note 23 above.

<sup>26</sup> *BHG*, 551: L. G. Westerink, "Trois textes inédits sur s. Diomède de Nicée," *AnalBoll*, 84 (1966), 170, par. 4.

<sup>27</sup> *BHG*, 2239: H. Delehay, *Les saints stylites* (Brussels, 1923), 224.24–26.

vision, after which he asked for surgery. An *iatros* was summoned, but frightened by the terrible swelling he refused to operate until Sergius, in desperation, grasped the lancet (*siderion*)<sup>28</sup> and handed it over to the doctor (p. 219.29–37). If doctors appeared timid and awkward, St. Luke healed patients confidently and quickly: when the wife of “illustrious” John Iubes could not give birth to her baby for twenty days, Luke immediately helped her by giving her some holy bread and water (p. 229.13–21); after physicians had lost hope of curing Euthymius, a *clericus* of the New Church, Luke healed him (p. 222.30–37, 223.24); he sent holy bread to a certain Anna who dwelt near the Brazen Gate and was hopelessly ill, and she recovered right away (p. 229.33–230.5); in seven days he healed Phlorus Sarantopeches from leprosy with holy water and the “drastic remedy” (the hagiographer uses the words of the *Geoponica* 13:14.5) of his prayers (p. 225.24–226.3). The hagiographer cites many other examples of Luke’s medical successes, and calls him a universal doctor (p. 224.16–17), a distinguished doctor of the soul and body (p. 210.25–26), whose usual means of healing were prayers and holy bread and water. The hagiographer even makes the medical professionals acknowledge Luke’s triumph: a certain Stephen, “a man experienced in the medical art,” is said to have had a miraculous vision, in which he saw Luke’s soul ascending into heaven (p. 234.4–9).

In another *Vita*, that of St. Luke the Younger, or Steiriotes, we are transported to a different world: unlike the Stylite, his namesake was acting in a remote province, but the image of the doctor remains the same. A certain Nicholas is said to have had cholera. He turned to doctors for help; to some of them he paid a lot of gold, to some he promised to pay, if they could cure him of his grave illness. When his purse was empty, the doctors proclaimed his illness incurable, and so Nicholas lost both money and hope.<sup>29</sup> The wife of a nobleman from Thebes was ill (no definition of her ailment is given), and

her husband spent a great deal of money on doctors, ruined his fortune but got no help (Martini, 106.34–107.1). And again, in the cases in which secular physicians stood helpless, Luke the Younger performed miracles. A Boeotian woman suffered from an eye illness, and the doctors’ science and hands were of no avail. However, she was cured immediately at Luke’s tomb (Martini, 109.28–110.4). A certain John from the island of Terbenia had an unbearable pain in his legs; again, the illness was declared incurable, and again, he was immediately cured after having addressed his prayers to St. Luke (Martini, 112.36–113.13). The *clericus* Nicholas of Dauleia had dropsy; he visited doctors but they were evil and negligent, and only water from Luke’s tomb brought recovery (Martini, 117.1–15). An unnamed woman suffered from the illness that the *paides iatron* call *phagedaina* (cancerous sore) and no physician could help her; but in eight days she was healed at the tomb of Luke (Martini, 109.11–25). Many other healings are recorded in the *Vita* as performed by Luke both during and after his earthly existence, but even though his tomb is called “the free hospital (*amisthon iatreion*)” (Martini, 108.31), and though he appeared in a dream to the monk Gregory as an *iatros*, holding in his hands a *kauter*, a branding iron, to apply to Gregory’s sick stomach (Martini, 106.17–18), he modestly refused to be regarded as a physician and announced that there was one and only one doctor of the soul and body, God Himself (Martini, 101.15–17). He differs from his Constantinopolitan namesake also in that his favorite remedy was not holy bread and water but olive oil from a *photagogos* (“lamp”; Lampe, *s.v.*, gives only the meaning of window) (Martini, 109.20–25, 110.3–4 and others).

Olive oil from a *photagogos* is also the favorite remedy of another contemporary provincial saint, Paul of Latros,<sup>30</sup> who by these means healed even leprosy. He too used prayers defined as “the very drastic remedy” (Delehaye, p. 144.11). And like his colleagues he triumphed over “all the *iatroi*,” who were powerless before the strange and distressing disease of a certain Leo-Luke, an inhabitant of a site called Thebes near Miletus (p. 143.13–144.11).

The incompetence of physicians is strongly emphasized in the *Vita* of Nicon Metanoieite. A *strategos* of the Peloponnese named Gregory suddenly fell sick and, although he was carefully tended by local doctors, did not recover; even the bishop of

<sup>28</sup>See L. Bliquez, “Two Lists of Greek Surgical Instruments and the State of Surgery in Byzantine Times,” in this volume.

<sup>29</sup>BHG, 994. The *Vita* is published in PG, 111, col. 441–80, with important additions by E. Martini, “Supplementa ad acta S. Lucae junioris,” *AnalBoll*, 13 (1894). Here p. 118.3–119.3. Some unique evidence to the amount of doctors’ fee is preserved in the Life of Anthony the Younger (d. 865): the saint, at that time still a governor of the *theme* of Cibyrraeotes, disguised himself as a physician; a rich proprietor promised him a third of his estate if Anthony cured his wife of barrenness; the saint-governor-doctor required ten war stallions instead, and the agreement was concluded (BHG, 142: A. I. Papadopoulos-Kerameus in *Pravoslavnyj Palestinskij sbornik*, 57 [1907], 196.1–7).

<sup>30</sup>BHG, 1474: H. Delehaye in *AnalBoll*, 11 (1892), 173.2–6, 175.5–6.

Sparta tried to help him, the man who was, according to the hagiographer, at the very acme of medical science.<sup>31</sup> Of course, Nikon's prayers cured Gregory at once. Medical skill was of no avail when a servant of Basil Apocaurus was found paralyzed in his bed (Lampros, p. 184.31–185.3) and in the case of a kind boy named Manuel who had illness of the testicles (p. 204.22–31). Neither the skill of *asklepiadai* nor the cures suggested by neighbors helped Vitalius of Aquileia (p. 215.16–28). No human help was successful, repeats the hagiographer in several other cases, but Nikon managed to heal, applying various remedies—anointment, olive oil, vision. A certain George, the son of Stephen, whose illness resisted all medical skill and science, was healed by Nikon's image (p. 204.13–20).

The *iatron paides* in the Life of Michael Maleinus turn out to be helpless in the face of the tremendous swelling that covered the ears, eyes, nose and mouth of Theophanes, Michael's disciple. They managed only to pry open the sick man's mouth and pour in some water; in desperation, they decided to cut open his face and neck, even though they guessed that Theophanes would not survive surgery. Of course, the saint's intervention healed the poor wretch.<sup>32</sup>

We can observe the same change in Greek Saints' Lives from South Italy. The Life of Elias the Younger (d. 903) records sundry cases of healing performed by this saint.<sup>33</sup> Even the Saracens called him "doctor and savior sent by God" (1.298–99), although he was first and foremost "the doctor of souls" (1.610–11). But there is no contempt for the medical profession in this Life. Quite a different attitude is disclosed in the Lives written about a century later.

The Life of Elias Speleotis, who belonged to the next generation,<sup>34</sup> describes an inexperienced physician: in his boyhood, Elias fell from a high place and damaged his fingers; "an ignorant and inexperienced *iatros*" put on a splint (*narthex*), with the

result that in eight days Elias lost all his fingers (*ActaSS*, Septembris III, 852DE). Elias, on the other hand, functioned as a doctor with a great success: his skill consisted predominantly in extracting strange objects from the ill body. Thus, in a dream he approached a certain Christopher, cut his belly open, and extracted a goose egg (p. 883B). He drove a raven out of the mouth of the ill priest Epiphanius (p. 871B). Further details are related about the illness of the noble *archon* Gaudiosus, who was frustrated by visiting various temples of saints and made up his mind to sail to Palermo and consult the doctors there. On the boat, however, he had a vision: "the great doctor Elias" approached him, opened his mouth and extracted from his stomach a suckling piglet that he tossed into the sea (p. 871C–872D).

St. Sabas the Younger, another holy man from Byzantine South Italy, was very successful in curing all sorts of illnesses. His Life, written by Orestes of Jerusalem (d. 1005), comprises all the essential features of the hagiographical pattern: medical doctors who cannot help the sick,<sup>35</sup> money squandered on doctors without result (Cozza-Luzzi, p. 56.34–36, 61.8–11), and innumerable cures of the saint himself, who is called "the great doctor who requires no fee" (p. 56.39–40). More specific about medical rivals of the saint is the Life of Nilus of Rossano: he met a Jewish doctor, Domnulus by name,<sup>36</sup> who is characterized as a man of profound knowledge and medical experience. Domnulus proposed a medication to St. Nilus and boasted that after taking it Nilus would never know sickness, but the saint rejected the proposal. He wanted nothing to do with human drugs since, as he put it, his only physician was God Jesus Christ. Domnulus reappears once more in the Life—as an eyewitness and admirer of Nilus' victory over a high Byzantine official (*BHG*, 1370: *ActaSS*, Septembris VII, 290F–291A, 293C).

The opposition of saint and doctor is a typical phenomenon of Byzantine hagiography, and this opposition acquires a particular sharpness towards the end of the tenth century. Eventually it was softened, and we do not meet any trace of animosity against the physician in the richest eleventh-century hagiographical text, the Life of Lazarus Galesiotes, even though the hagiographer, Lazarus' disciple Gregory, records several cases of miraculous heal-

<sup>31</sup> *BHG*, 1366: S. Lampros in *Nēos 'Ell.*, 3 (1906), 173.7–11.

<sup>32</sup> *BHG*, 1295: L. Petit in *ROChr*, 7 (1902), 566.23–567.14.

<sup>33</sup> *BHG*, 580: G. R. Taibbi, *Vita di sant'Elia il Giovane* (Palermo, 1962), 11.287–89, 582–85, 515–22, 806–9, 1127–33, 1311–30, 1620–23.

<sup>34</sup> Elias Speleotis was still young when Elias the Younger foretold his own death (*BHG*, 581: *ActaSS*, Septembris III, 861B). A certain Elias "spileot" was a scribe of a manuscript (Paris. 375) completed in 1021, but G. Schirò, "Testimonianza innografica dell'attività scriptoria di S. Elia lo Speleota," *ByzF*, 2 (1967), 316 f., denies the identity of the two namesakes. At any rate, the hagiographer seems to have lived some considerable span of time after Speleotis' death.

<sup>35</sup> *BHG*, 1611: I. Cozza-Luzzi, *Historia et laudes SS. Sabae et Macarii junioris* (Rome, 1893), 48.1–7, 52.10–13.

<sup>36</sup> On Domnulus, E. Lieber, "Asaf's Book of Medicines," in this volume.



ings. Moreover, Gregory did not care much about bodily recovery: according to him, Lazarus admonished those who were afflicted by ailments or tortured by demons not to lose their spirit but praise God and live in anticipation of future rewards (*BHG*, 979: *ActaSS*, Novembris III, 563B). The Life of Lazarus is "neutral." Two rare cases in which the hagiographers tried to overcome traditional adversity against the medical profession deserve attention. The first case is relatively late and belongs to the area of South Italy. Cyprian of Calamizzi<sup>37</sup> was born into a doctor's family and was taught medicine by his father; after his father's death he inherited his wealth, glory and estates. Cyprian built "a holy house" on one of his paternal estates and would heal the sick—as the hagiographer emphasizes—without taking money.<sup>38</sup> This exceptional case could be explained as referring to the outlying areas of Byzantium; similarly, the Kievan *Paterik* appreciates rather positively the doctor Agapit (probably a Greek, Agapetus) who acted at the court of Vladimir Monomach (1113–25).<sup>39</sup> More complicated is the case of the Life of Athanasius of Athos.

I am not going to dwell here on the controversy over the priority of the versions of this *Vita*. Let us assume that both versions were produced almost simultaneously, in the beginning of the eleventh century, soon after Athanasius' death (ca. 1001). One of these versions, that of the Lavra, contains many traditional elements of the medical image: Athanasius is called the wisest physician (*BHG*, 188: L. Petit in *AnalBoll*, 25 [1906], 60.16–17), his tomb, "the free hospital" (p. 82.15); the *apothecarius* Athanasius had dropsy and doctors had lost all hope of healing him, but the saint touched his belly and drove the illness away (p. 74.27–75.4). The monk Eustratius had blood in his urine; the saint recommended that he set off for Constantinople and address himself to first-class doctors who, however, gave him no relief and even did him substantial damage. At last Athanasius helped him by prescribing water drunk with roses (p. 80.7–81.6). Incidentally or not, there are no such invectives against doctors in the other version of the Life produced in Constantinople. Even more curious is the story

about the incurable disease of a monk, in which the author of the Constantinopolitan version stresses that the nature of this disease remained obscure both to "the wise doctor" (i.e., Athanasius) and to all other people,<sup>40</sup> whereas the phrase about Athanasius' ignorance is lacking in the Lavra version (Petit, 68.29–31). Perhaps the clue to the reserve of the Constantinopolitan version is the existence of the Lavra hospital founded by Athanasius, in which he tended severe wounds (Petit, 53.24–33, Noret, par. 141.6–12). The hagiographer mentions a *nosokomos* who was one of the distinguished monks of the Lavra (Petit, 53.25–26, Noret, par. 154.1–5), and the Lavra doctor Timotheus is also mentioned (the words "of the Lavra" are lacking in the Lavra version), even though quite naturally he could not compete with "the great physician" Athanasius (Petit, 69.24–33, Noret, par. 204.13–30).

To a certain extent, Byzantine moralists of the eleventh century retained the hagiographers' negative attitude towards the medical profession. Christopher of Mitylene left at least two epigrams dedicated to medical problems. One of them was written on hospitals and the patients who stay in them, but unfortunately the text is so corrupted that we cannot glean much information from this poem. The second epigram is addressed to an anonymous doctor, and it is typical of a transitional period, since it reflects both old and new attitudes. "You should not be proud of your profession," says Christopher. "You rather ought to despise yourself, for you get your living from urine and excrement."<sup>41</sup> The doctors of the eleventh century were already proud of their activity, but they had not yet acquired the high esteem of those elements of society whose opinions were reflected by Christopher. Cecaumenus, in his *Admonitions*, written in the 1070s, dedicated a long paragraph to a vicious doctor.<sup>42</sup> There he stresses—in full accord with hagiography—the doctor's tendency to pump out the patient's entire fortune. But Cecaumenus' physician acts this way not out of lack of experience; rather, he is "very knowing" (*sphodra epistemon*), and deliberately revives the illness in search of profit. Symeon the Theologian follows the traditional pattern, and speaks of an inexperienced doctor who frequently misused both surgery and cauteriz-

<sup>37</sup> He lived in the second half of the twelfth century, according to D. Stiernon, "Saint Cyprien de Calamizzi († vers 1210–1215)," *REB*, 32 (1974), 247–52.

<sup>38</sup> *BHG*, 2089: G. Schirò in *BGrottaf*, 4 (1950), 88.1–29, 90.37–38.

<sup>39</sup> *Das Paterikon des Kiever Höhlenklosters*, ed. D. Tschizhevskij (Munich, 1964), 128–33, *slovo* 27: "On Holy and Saint Agapit, the Doctor who Performed Cures without Payment."

<sup>40</sup> *BHG*, 187: J. Noret, *Vitae duae antiquae S. Athanasii Athonitae* (Turnhout, Leuven, Brepols, 1982), par. 197.1–7.

<sup>41</sup> *Die Gedichte des Christophoros Mitylenaios*, ed. E. Kurtz (Leipzig, 1903), nos. 130 and 85.

<sup>42</sup> *Sovety i rasskazy Kekavmena*, ed. G. G. Litavrin (Moscow, 1972), 224.12–226.6.

ing.<sup>43</sup> Accordingly, in Symeon's *Vita* by Nicetas Stethatus, we read a story about a certain Manasses, whom doctors thought incurable but who was healed by the oil from a lamp at Symeon's icon.<sup>44</sup> But quite unexpectedly, Symeon, a religious writer of the beginning of the eleventh century, draws a parallel between the spiritual doctor and the surgeon who performs an autopsy in order to understand the structure of the human body and apply the knowledge acquired to the healing of patients.<sup>45</sup>

The twelfth-century authors paid special attention to the medical profession: one of them is the court poet of John II, Theodore Prodromus; the second, the anonymous author of the *Timarion*, has been identified either with Nicholas Callicles, Alexius I's physician (see above), or with Prodromus himself. Among other works, Prodromus wrote the Life of St. Meletius the Younger; another Life of the same saint came from the pen of the contemporary theologian Nicholas of Methone.<sup>46</sup> While Nicholas does not mention medical doctors in his version of the *Vita*, Prodromus does. He accepts the traditional pattern, and tells us of *asklepiadai* summoned to cure a young relative of Leo Nicerites: they acted, he says, like vultures and harvested a fortune (p. 60.26–27). Prodromus plainly contrasted “the unadorned medical science of the Savior” with the sophisticated but inefficient methods borrowed from Galen's books or Hippocrates' aphorisms (p. 53.31–33). Traditional though he was, Prodromus had, at least, the hearsay of Galen and Hippocrates. Moreover, he dared to acknowledge that a certain Theodosius of Athens was a man of marvellous medical skill (p. 61.11–12). Yet Prodromus took another step. He produced a new genre—a funny and tragicomic scene entitled *Executioner or Doctor* and describing his own visit to a dentist, a runt who immediately fetched a gigantic tool, fit to extract an elephant's tusk. But the poor doctor could not manage it and succeeded only in breaking off a part of the aching tooth.<sup>47</sup> The wan-

dering plot of the clumsy dentist finally wound up in one of the most famous short stories of Chekhov. In Prodromus' story the event is not only secularized and the medical profession mocked, but the author opposes good physicians to ignorant and boorish *asklepiadai*: at the end of the scene he addresses two praiseworthy doctors and gives their names—one of them is his close friend Michael Lizix, and another one, Nicholas Callicles, whom we have already mentioned (Podestà, 21.17–21). In the monody on the death of Stephen Scylitzes, Prodromus relates the arrival of his dying friend from Trebizond at Constantinople: the goal of this last journey was Stephen's desire to be treated “by the most experienced doctors.”<sup>48</sup>

Even more paradoxical is the *Timarion*'s approach to medicine. Like the *Executioner or Doctor*, the anonymous dialogue is written as satire. The external plot is as follows: a certain Timarion, while visiting a fair in Thessalonica, was affected with a serious infirmity. According to the demons' judgment pronounced at his bed, he had lost all his bile, and since Asclepius and Hippocrates state that the human being cannot exist if deprived of one of his major elements, Timarion was condemned to be transferred to the nether world. There he met various people, including his own teacher Theodore of Smyrna, a famous rhetorician, who was also knowledgeable about ancient medicine. The image is thoroughly ironical, even though the lion's share of allusions escape the perception of the twentieth-century reader. In the first place, if the earthly Theodore had been sturdy, the man whom Timarion met in the nether world was tremendously skinny; the change is explained in terms of diet: Theodore has tamed his gluttonous stomach, lost unnecessary flesh, and by so doing healed himself of the gout he suffered in the days when he served the emperor. Dietary self-restraint is a mandatory element of every hagiographical legend, and accordingly, in the *Timarion*, Theodore is said to “cure the soul and the body” (ed. Romano, 71.611). But what was utterly serious in the *Vitae* acquires a nuance of play in the *Timarion*: Theodore displays only the parody of Christian temperance, and what this faster discusses with Timarion is a present from above of the one thing he is longing for, his favor-

<sup>43</sup> K. Holl, *Enthusiasmus und Bussgewalt* (Leipzig, 1898), 117.9–10.

<sup>44</sup> BHG, 1692: I. Hausherr, “Un grand mystique byzantin,” *OrChr*, 12 (1928), par. 144.4–20.

<sup>45</sup> Syméon le Nouveau Théologien, *Traité théologiques et éthiques*, ed. J. Darrouzès, 2 (Paris, 1967), 138.269–140.278.

<sup>46</sup> BHG, 1247–48: V. G. Vasil'evskij in *Pravoslavnyj Palestinskij sbornik*, VI, 2 (1886).

<sup>47</sup> G. Podestà, “Le satire Lucianesche di Teodoro Prodromo,” *Aevum*, 21 (1947), 17 f. On an “ignorant *iatros*,” see also Prodromus' letter to the metropolitan of Trebizond (PG, 133, col. 1256A). The equation of the doctor and the executioner was a

topos of the Late Roman literature—see B. Baldwin, “Beyond the House Call,” in this volume.

<sup>48</sup> L. Petit, “Monodie de Théodore Prodrome sur Etienne Skylitzes métropolitain de Trébizonde,” *IRAIK*, 8 (1902), 13.211–34.



ite food (p. 74.673). Secondly, Theodore is presented as a braggart, who promises—by his cleverness—to liberate Timarion, to release him from the nether world, and to win over the famous ancient gods and healers. But his criticism of Hippocrates and Erasistratus is philological rather than medical, limited to ridiculing their stylistic and grammatical shortcomings, whereas Galen is for Theodore no more than a man concealed in a remote corner of Hell and hastily filling gaps in his book *On Various Kinds of Fever*. The central scene of the dialogue, the trial of Timarion and the speech pronounced by Theodore on behalf of Timarion, are consummate parodies: Timarion's fate is entrusted to the council of doctors, who act as judges rather than physicians and whose chairman, Hippocrates, is clad in a funny Arab costume.

The relentless rejection of secular medicine so typical of the hagiographical literature, especially of the second half of the tenth century, was replaced in the twelfth century by satirical nicety, and it was hard to distinguish who was more the butt of ridicule, the awkward and verbose doctor or his garrulous victim. At the same time, sincere respect for the medical profession was emerging. George Tornices was, perhaps, the most eloquent defender of physicians: in his letter to Alexius Ducas Bryennius he argues against the image of the doctor-executioner (*demios*) that was reflected, as we have seen, in Prodromus satire. Tornices contrasts the two figures: he speaks of the cup of medication passed over by the human-loving palms of the physician that are opposed to the rash hands of the executioner. Again, the actions of executioners and malicious cooks are contrasted with those of doctors (Darrouzès, *Georges et Dèmètrius*, 164.5–7, 165.9–10). The topic was touched upon by another twelfth-century writer, Nicetas Choniates (*Historia*, 298.14), who overtly differentiated the doctor and the poisoner. Several times Tornices re-

turns to the subject of medicine in his panegyric of Anna Comnena: even though he retains the traditional contrast between the limitations of “the best *iatroi*” and God's almightiness (Darrouzès, p. 313.2–4), he asserts that “the hand of the *iatros*” cleans the wound and heals “with minimal pain” (p. 293.27–28) and marvels at the skill of the “wise among doctors” who use wonderful and fitting tools in operating on people and cutting open corpses (p. 225.13–14). And his lady-patroness Anna was also very attentive to doctors, whose activity she describes and whose names she mentions. We can come back to the letters I quoted at the beginning: again, the letters of the twelfth century are mostly full of respect towards doctors who were friends of epistolographers.

I would like to formulate a hypothesis by way of conclusion: it seems to me that we have indications—however slight they may appear—that after the seventh century the medical profession in Byzantium temporarily lost its social standing; in any case the society became lukewarm and negligent towards medical doctors, hagiography ignored them, and intellectuals did not consider them as their peers. The situation began to change, probably, at the end of the tenth century: hagiography of about *l'an mil* wages a sharp war against secular physicians and scolds greediness and incompetence of the medical doctor who dares to match the omnipotent healing power of the saint; in other words, the doctor had become too influential to be neglected. But the anti-doctoral attack was no success: by the twelfth century, the physician enters as equal the establishment of functionaries and literati (one of whom he, indeed, was); he becomes respected, although mocked time and again by a society that started to care for its health more than for its salvation.

Dumbarton Oaks